

On the Calcutta Mail Train, approaching Calcutta,  
April 1, 1924.

Dear Margaret,

Perhaps at this very moment you are arguing over broken dishes and scratches in furniture with Mr. Hill, the agent, or bossing the servants as they load the baggage on a bullock cart. I wish you complete success and hope you will be comfortably settled in the G.O.H. when Mother's boat arrives. I am very glad that you will all have the benefit of a week at Nuwara Eliya before traveling in North India. It is very hot here and remarkably dusty. Fortunately the railway company gives lots of room to its first class passengers. When I started from Madras, two of us had a compartment about 9 X 11 feet with one room opening off it for the closet and another for lavatory and shower bath. There was even a needle spray for ladies who do not wish to wet their hair, although I do not think they needed to be so particular when hair would dry in this air almost immediately.

Give Mother my love and tell her I wish that I could have met her at the ship. I shall try to do so at Bombay. I would like it if you would write all the plans that you make regarding the Indian trip to me in care of the American Consul at Bombay. Let me know what plans I should make before you arrive and what reservations or arrangements you are making in advance. Aren't you lucky to have Freda with you on this crowded day of moving and meeting boats?

Last Saturday I attended a luncheon at Government House in Madras. It was a sort of luncheon party and the American Consul and a large number of other guests were there. On arrival one found the steps ornamented with Indians in gaudy uniforms and carrying lances with tiny flags on them.

In the evening I left with our local Director for Coconada, which is nearly half way to Calcutta. We were met at the station by our local staff and presented with nosegays, and when we left the station to take a motor car we beheld a banner inscribed "Welcome to Dr. Sawyer" and carried between poles by two very dark boys. A Canadian Missionary, Mr. Benson, entertained me at his house, and we spent the early afternoon sleeping under punkahs. It was very hot, and Mr. Benson had sent his family to the hills to stay until the cooler weather.

Toward evening we went by car to a village and heard a lecture in Telugu on the usual subject of hookworm disease. The tom-tom beater was very much in evidence and a good crowd had gathered. The lecturer used lantern pictures, which are still a drawing card among these people who see so few pictures of any kind.

On my return to the main line to Calcutta I saw a palanquin borne by six coolies bringing a rich lady to the train. The lady was completely invisible, and when she transferred herself to the compartment on the train, curtains were held by men with poles so that there was not the slightest unguarded chink for a bird to see through. When the shy lady reached her destination a bright red curtain and canopy was similarly held and, in the absence of her palanquin, the whole tight cloth enclosure moved off, in a circle of bearers with poles, while her ladyship walked inside. How is that for 100% modesty! I am told that these women are so modest that they usually develop tuberculosis from lack of light and air. I do not know whether they are

Mohammedans or a wealthy class of Hindu merchants.

When you go to Delhi, etc., any clothes that are cream or khaki colored will be very valuable for white clothes do not stay clean ten minutes on the train. The dirt, however, is all sterilized and looks will not kill. However, it would be very nice to have a tinted suit. I am wearing white to save at least one silk suit to start my visits in Calcutta with.

Tell Dr. Docherty that the bed-roll is proving very useful and comfortable.

I shall be so glad to see you all at Bombay. I want Billy to leave his spots in Ceylon and come with his nice normal skin.

When Peggy's birthday comes give her my best wishes for a happy birthday. Perhaps I shall be able to find something nice for her before I get to Bombay.

With much love to you all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gilbert".